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RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 8723  
RUEHNN/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 1099  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 2452  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO PRIORITY 9308  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 001843

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KNNP](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [NK](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: ABDUCTEE PARENTS MEET WITH THE AMBASSADOR AND THE PRESS

Classified By: Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer for reason 1.4 (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: The Ambassador July 2 invited to his residence Shigeru and Sakie Yokota, parents of 13-year old abductee Megumi Yokota to discuss the recent decision to being the delisting process to remove North Korea from the Department's States Sponsors of Terrorism list. The Yokotas were accompanied by Shigeo Iizuka, chairman of the Association of the Families of Victims Kidnapped by North Korea (ADVKN) and Teruaki Masumoto, ADVKN Secretary General. Just prior to meeting with the Ambassador, the Yokotas had appeared at a press conference sponsored by the Foreign Correspondent's Club of Japan. The Yokotas and the ADVKN officers expressed gratitude for the President's June 26 remarks about the abductees, but regretted that the delisting process has been launched. The Yokotas were more understanding, agreeing that leverage remains and that Japan, the United States, and others must work together to assure a denuclearized Korean peninsula and a resolution to the abduction issue. END SUMMARY.

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AMBASSADOR HOSTS ABDUCTEE FAMILY MEMBERS  
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12. (C) The Ambassador told the Yokotas, Iizuka, and Masumoto that he realized the decision to remove North Korea from the terrorism list might be a difficult one for the families to understand, and he wanted to explain the process, answer any questions they might have, and assure them that the President and the United States remain resolved to achieving a successful resolution of the abduction issue. It is also important, he continued, to let North Korea and the rest of the world know that the United States continues to be serious about this issue and will work closely with Japan to continue to bring pressure on the North to adequately address this issue. The need to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons remains our main priority, but the North Koreans also agreed to address humanitarian issues which, in our view, clearly includes the fate of the abductees. Progress with the North Koreans has been slow, but they have begun to disable their nuclear reactor at Yongbyon have provided documentation, and have acknowledged our concern with their highly enriched uranium program and proliferation activities.

Based on the concept of "action for action" we then announced that we would take steps to remove North Korea from our terrorism list. We realize that the North has only taken small steps and that the families, as do we, would like to see much more progress. But the North has also agreed to reopen the investigation into the abduction cases after years of adamantly stating they consider the case closed. They wouldn't have agreed to this without the pressure exerted by

the United States.

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FAMILIES REGRET DELISTING...  
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13. (C) Iizuka replied by stating that the families very much appreciated the President's remarks on June 26 that the U.S. will not forget the abductees, but have always believed that delisting meant so much to North Korea that it would have a great impact on them. Accordingly, the families think it is regrettable that the U.S. has commenced the delisting process. He thinks that once North Korea is off the list, it will become "foolish" and think it is in a stronger position, or that the sanctions imposed by Japan will not be observed. The Ambassador agreed that it was important to the North Koreans that they be removed from the list. But it is important for the North to understand that being taken off the list and then simply agreeing to reinvestigate the abductions cases is not enough. Deeds are more important than words, and the United States and Japan will both be looking to the North Koreans for sincere, serious actions. The U.S. will be watching closely for real progress during the 45-day delisting notification period. And although much of the focus will be on the nuclear issue we'll continue to tell the North Koreans they must also seriously address the abduction issue. In addition, the North must understand that the only way it can ever hope to get economic assistance from Japan will be to solve this problem.

14. (C) Masumoto also thanked the Ambassador for receiving

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them, but took a harder line on the delisting, insisting that by taking North Korea off the list the U.S. was giving up an important pressure point. He also expressed the misunderstanding, which was corrected by the Ambassador, that North Korea was on the list as a result of their involvement in the abduction issue. Masumoto then said that what the families fear the most is that the North will engage in some sort of token investigation, agree to return three or four abductees, then kill the remainder, which he claimed numbered over one hundred. Accordingly, he said, the families want the U.S. to wait until the final outcome of the abductee issue before delisting. The best approach, he asserted, is to maintain as much pressure as possible. He also questioned why the U.S. was treating North Korea more leniently than it had treated Libya, which wasn't taken off the list until it had accepted responsibility for the Pan Am 103 attack, turned over the suspects, and agreed to pay compensation to the families.

15. (C) The Ambassador replied to Masumoto by asking him whether it was his view that there should be no negotiations at all with the North, and said that if this course of action was followed, there would have been no progress on either the denuclearization or abductee issues. Masumoto simply replied it is better to maintain a hard line, noting that Kim Jong-Il has no problem watching two or three million North Koreans die of starvation and is easily capable of killing all the abductees just to be through with the matter. The Ambassador agreed that this may very well be so, but pointed out that if this were true, the abductees would be at risk even without negotiations. He reminded Masumoto that for the past six years the North has been insisting that the abductee case is closed, but as a result of negotiations, they are now willing to address this matter again. That's a small but significant step. It is our hope that when the North Koreans realize that the United States and Japan both want this to happen the issue will be addressed seriously.

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...BUT UNDERSTAND  
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16. (C) Mr. Yokota said he shared the Ambassador's opinion:

the abduction issue will not be solved until the nuclear issue is resolved, and what North Korea wants at the end of the day is economic assistance from the U.S. and Japan, not only China and/or Russia. If Japan steadfastly adheres to the position that there can be no normalization while the abduction issue is unresolved the North Koreans will have to solve this problem to Japan's satisfaction. Mrs. Yokota concurred, telling the Ambassador that at their press conference right before the meeting, she had said we must all work together to advance the Six Party Talks process. "What we have on our mind is the same as you." She also emphasized the need for a strong and effective verification process, noting that although the North Koreans had blown up a cooling tower, there may be other facilities elsewhere that are still operational. She said the 45-day period is short and that she hopes the verification process can be completed. "We cannot let the North Koreans hide nuclear facilities." The Ambassador agreed that this is why the verification process is so important, but cautioned her that the 45-day period would be just the start of the process. "We want a process that will guarantee that the North Koreans give up their nuclear weapons and not reacquire them later," the Ambassador said.

17. (C) Iizuka asked the Ambassador for his judgment about whether the North will really cooperate with a renewed investigation. It is likely, replied the Ambassador, that the North will do as little as they possibly can. It will be necessary to maintain pressure on them, and we will stress that we expect them to engage in a credible investigation that will be one that people can believe when it's completed. Mrs. Yokota asked whether the Ambassador was aware of any secret intelligence about the fate of the abductees, and he replied that he was not. She ended the conversation with the Ambassador by saying she and her husband understand the position of the United States: "North Korea is like a stone; nothing will come out of it. We understand the U.S. is trying different routes to make the stone softer, and we must all work together to move forward."

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YOKOTAS MEET THE PRESS  
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18. (U) Just prior to meeting with the Ambassador, the Yokotas participated in their sixth professional luncheon with the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan (FCCJ). The couple expressed disappointment at the U.S. decision to delist North Korea as a state sponsor of terrorism, but acknowledged that delisting was not linked directly to Japan, and would benefit North Korea very little. They credited U.S. pressure for bringing about a change in North Korea's policy of claiming that the abductions issue has been resolved, and referred to that recent development as "an important point in resolving the abductions issue." They also thanked President Bush and Secretary Rice for understanding their concerns and not forgetting the abductees.

19. (U) At the same time, the Yokota's asserted, the abduction issue must be resolved bilaterally between Japan and North Korea. They were dismayed that Japanese officials had not briefed them on the agreement to lift sanctions in exchange for a reinvestigation into the abductions issue, but welcomed the decision not to grant energy assistance until real progress has been achieved. Japan still has strong cards with which to play, they noted, even without the abductions issue. The abductions issue requires a diplomatic solution, and North Korea needs to be persuaded that Japan and other nations ultimately want to be on friendly terms. That said, there is a very real fear among the families that diplomatic fumbling could prevent the return of the abductees.

110. (U) The Yokotas refused to state a clear preference for either "pressure" or "dialogue." The policy of strengthening

sanctions under former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had not proven effective, they argued. At the same time, current Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda's emphasis on dialogue could easily backfire, and efforts by a supra-partisan parliamentary league prioritizing normalization are unlikely to bear fruit. Whereas Abe had made clear that resolution of the abductions issue meant return of all abductees, Fukuda appears willing to lift sanctions in exchange for "progress."

The problem for the abductee families is that they have not been told who will measure that progress and how it will be defined. Either way, they are concerned that any Japanese participation in a "sham" reinvestigation will only make Japan complicit in DPRK deception. The Yokotas themselves said they do not plan to participate, even if invited, and are particularly worried that their abducted daughter Megumi's daughter (their granddaughter) might be used as a pawn.

SCHIEFFER